

MAY 2 1966

CHARLES BARTLETT

Moscow Plagued by Jitters Over Baltic Exiles

NEW YORK — The question of whether Erik Heine is a Communist agent or an patriotic Estonian hero serves at least to direct attention to the Soviet enslavement of the Baltic republics. This reminder is useful at a time when the Kremlin is making freedom an issue in South Viet Nam.

Whatever Heine proves to be, there are ample grounds for the charge that Moscow sends agents to penetrate exile communities. Others have made this effort. In fact the greatest mark of Soviet concern for the nations it has occupied is the attention it accords their exiles.

A young Estonian named Artur Haman landed in Sweden after escaping from Soviet territory in 1955. He was an attractive, bright young fellow and he took a part-time job with the Associated Press while he studied at Stockholm University. Later he worked with Estonian groups in Sweden and wrote a textbook in Swedish for Estonians. He was completely accepted by his fellow exiles. He came to the United

States in 1961 to attend a congress of linguists. The CIA had established that he was an agent. He was interviewed closely during his stay and when all the questions had been asked, he was advised to leave the country. He returned to Stockholm but disappeared during May 1963. No one knew what had happened to him until a letter appeared five months later over his name in Izvestia. It complained that he had been hounded out of the West by CIA persecution.

Soviet policy toward exiles from the Baltic states and the Ukraine is to keep them penetrated, intimidated and, if possible, divided. A Communist newspaper, Homeland, is distributed in their native tongues and it persistently attacks the exile leadership. Occasionally an active exile leader is assassinated in Europe by Soviet agents.

All this activity could betray a sense of insecurity on the part of the Kremlin. A Latvian elevated to the Soviet presidium, Arvid Pelshe, told the party Congress there are "quite a few difficulties,"

including a failure to attach sufficient significance to Marxism, in the Baltic republics. But the guerrilla bands, encircled by the Soviet army and unaided by the West, stopped fighting in the early 1950's. None of the ingredients of an uprising exists today.

Still these nations were highly literate before the Soviets seized them in 1939 and their cultures are being doggedly preserved against the rigors of the Communist system. A spirit of nationalism is sustained in language and literature, a sort of cultural subversion encouraged by the exiles.

"Bourgeois nationalism" is a serious sin in Communist eyes but its persistence is attested to by reports reaching the West that a large number of writers, more than 20 and less than 40, were arrested in the Ukraine last fall. Such activities keep alive the exiles' hopes that liberation, sparked from within, may one day be attainable.

The prospect seems remote but it is hard to believe that the book has been closed on

this sordid chapter in history. The Baltic states were the first to recognize the Soviet government in 1920 and the first to be swallowed in 1939.

One year of Communist rule was so brutal that the Germans were received as liberators in the Baltic states. They had endured the rigors of false elections, mass deportations, and shootings and they counted on the West's determination to save them from a return of the Russians.

But their rescue lost its priority as the war unfolded. Churchill and Roosevelt gradually acceded to Stalin's insistence upon having the Baltic states. "In a deadly struggle," Churchill wrote later, "it is not right to assume more burdens than those who are fighting for a great cause can bear."

The United States could perhaps have used its nuclear weight to save these countries at the end of the war. The evidence of the Heine case that the CIA is involved with the Baltic exiles is reassurance at least that the cause of freedom is being kept alive.